

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 IO-13 DHA-02
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4878
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
USMISSION USBERLIN UNN
USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BERLIN 6128

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, ELAB, GE
SUBJECT: NINTH CONGRESS OF EAST GERMAN TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION

SUMMARY: A RECENT FOUR-DAY MEETING OF THE COMMUNIST "FREE
TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION" EXHORTED MEMBERS TO RAISE
PRODUCTIVITY IN ORDER TO KEEP THE GDR STANDARD OF LIVING
RISING. THE CONGRESS INVITED BROADER CONTACTS WITH
WESTERN TRADE UNIONS ORGANIZATIONS, AND WEST GERMAN
TRADE UNIONISTS ACCEPTED INVITATIONS TO OBSERVE THE
CONFERENCE. CONFERENCE SPEECHES EXPLOITED WESTERN
ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES, AND TOOK THE OFFENSIVE ON
HUMAN RIGHTS. OPENNESS OF RESPONSES TO WESTERN
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CRITICISM OF THE GDR AND THE CONGRESS SUGGEST A MEASURE
OF CONFIDENCE IN THE REGIME'S ABILITY TO HANDLE ATTACKS
ON VULNERABLE ASPECTS OF THE EAST GERMAN SYSTEM.
END SUMMARY.

1. THE NINTH CONGRESS OF THE EAST GERMAN COMMUNIST
FREE GERMAN TRADE UNION CONFERATION (FDGB) WAS HELD

MAY 16-19. THE EVENT, HELD EVERY FIVE YEARS, BROUGHT TO PP DELEGATES REPRESENTING 8.3 MILLION FDGB MEMBERS TO EAST BERLIN'S PALACE OF THE REPUBLIC FOR A FOUR-DAY ORGY OF COMMUNIST RHETORIC ORCHESTRATED BY FDGB CHAIRMAN AND SED POLITBURO MEMBER TARRY TISCH, WHO KICKED OFF THE CONFERENCE WITH A THREEHOUR "REPORT OF THEBOARD" ON MONDAY, MAY 16 AND ENDED IT ON THURSDAY WITH CONCLUDING REMARKS. IN BETWEEN, THE CONGRESS HEARD AN ADDRESS BY HONECEKR, AND ABOUT 50 SPEECHES BY CONFERENCE DELEGATES AND REPRESENTATIVES OF SOME OF 77 FOREIGN TRADE UNION ORGANIZATIONS CLAIMED TO BE PRESENT. THE CONGRESS WAS TREATD IN ADDITION TO APPEARANCES BY AN NVA AND BORDER TROOP HONOR GUARD, AND A YOUNG PIONEER/FDJ CONTINGENT. AMONG OTHER ITEMS OF BUSINESS WERE THE APPROVAL FOR TRANSMITTAL TO THE VOLKSKAMMER OF A REVISED LABOR CODE (BERLIN A-49), AND THE ELECTION OF A NEW 26-MEMBER PRESIDUM OF THE NATIONAL BOARD, REDUCING THE BODY FROM 29 TO 26 MEMBERS. TO NO ONE'S SURPRISE, TISCH WAS RE-ELECTED CHAIRMAN. RE-ELECTION OF A WOMAN, PROF. DR. JOHANNA TOEPFER AS DEPUTY CHAIRMAN, REFLECTS THE SIGNIFICANT ROLE OF WOMEN AT THE CONGRESS , 51 PERCENT OF THE DELEGATES TO WHICH WERE WOMEN. A SECOND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN, WOLFGANG BAYREUTHER, RECENTLY APPOINTD STATE SECRETARY FOR LABOR AND WAGES, WAS NOT RE-ELECTED TO THE DEPUTY CHAIRMANSHIP.

2. CONSISTENT WITH THE FDGB'S ROLE AS THE LARGEST
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GDR " MASS ORGANIZATION" AND BROADEST TRANSMISSION BELT FOR REGIME POLICY, THE CONGRESS PRESENTED A COMPREHSNSIVE EXPOSITION OF CURRENT REGIME POLICY LINES IN A VARIETY OF FIELDS, BUT PRIMARILY IN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POLICY. IN THIS FIELD, CONGRESS RHETORIC EMPHASIZED THAT THE CONTINUALLY RISING STANDARD OF LIVING DESIRD BY ALL CAN BE ACHIEVED ONLY THROUGH INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY, THE ELEMENTS OF WHICH ARE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL PROGRESS, INDIVIDAUL INNOVATIONTHROUGH THE "INNOVATORS' MOVEMENT", "SOCIALIST COMPETITION", "COUNTERPLANS" AND OTHER DEVICES. HONECKER MADE IT EXPLICIT THAT " THE CAPITALIST CRISIS AFFECTS US," AND HIGHER IMPORT PRICES NECESSITATE THE GDR'S RAISING ITS EXPORTS TO THE WEST. THE NINTH PARTY CONGRESS, HONECKER SAID, MADE CLEAR WHAT " IN VIEW OF CHANGED FOREIGN ECONOMIC CONDITIONS" IS NECESSARY TO KEEP INCOMES AND OUTPUT RISING.

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3. REFERENCES TO THE SOVIET UNION WER FREQUENT AND
FLATTERING , EMPHASIZING THE GDR'S ABJECT GRATITUTDE FOR
SOVIET LEADERSHIP IN ALL SPHERES OF HUMAN ENDEAVOR,
AND EAST GERMAN ENTHUSIAM OVER THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY
OF SOVIET COMMUNISM.

4. IN THE SPHERE OF INTERNATIONAL LABOR AFFAIRS,
TISCH IN A CONCILIATORY FASHION APPEALED TO TRADE
UNIONS " OF OTHER ORIENTATIONS"
TO ACCEPT ON THE BASIS OF GOOD WILL THE FDGB'S EFFORTS
TO ESTABLISH CONTACT. IN THIS CONNECTION, THE
WESTERN PRESS REPORTED PARTICIPATION AT THE CO GGRESS
OF WEST GERMAN DGB BOARD MEMBER LAPPAS AND DGB LAND
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BERLIN CHAIRMAN SICKERT. LAPPAS IS REPORTED IN THE

WESTERN PRESS AS PLANNING TO INVITE TISCH TO NEXT YEAR'S DGB CONGRESS IN HAMBURG. SICKERT'S PRESENCE WAS INTERPRETED AS SIGNALLING RENEWED ACCEPTANCE BY THE GDR OF THE AFFILIATION OF THE WEST BERLIN DGB WITH THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION.

5. THE CONGRESS EAGERLY EXPLOITED WESTERN ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES, REPEATEDLY CONTRASTING ECONOMIC SECURITY IN THE GDR WITH THE SITUATION IN THE INDUSTRIALIZED WEST WITH CURRENTLY 15 MILLION UNEMPLOYED INCLUDING 7 MILLION YOUNG PEOPLE. TAKING THE OFFENSIVE ON HUMAN RIGHTS, CONGRESS SPEAKERS CALLED THE RIGHT TO WORK THE FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT, ENJOYED BY THE CITIZENS OF COMMUNIST STATES AND DENIED IN THE WEST. AS REPORTED PREVIOUSLY, THE CONGRESS ALSO PROVIDED A PODIUM FOR AGGRESSIVE REBUTTALS BY HONECKER OF COMMENTS BY PRESIDENT CARTER AND CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT ON THE WALL (BERLIN 6083), AND SCHMIDT'S COMMENT ON THE FOUR-POWER STATUS OF BERLIN (BERLIN 6038).

6. ASSESSING THE CONGRESS OVERALL, WE FIND THE LEVEL OF CONCERN WITH PRODUCTIVITY AND PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE FOREIGN TRADE SECTOR TO BE HIGH, BUT NO HIGHER THAN GENERALLY SINCE THE GOVERNMENT SHUFFLE LAST OCTOBER. STRONG EMPHASIS ON INDIVIDUAL ECONOMIC SECURITY ADROITLY EXPLOITS WIDESPREAD KNOWLEDGE FROM WESTERN MEDIA OF WEST GERMAN UNEMPLOYMENT, SHORTAGE OF APPRENTICE POSITIONS, ETC. AND APPEARS TO APPEAL WITH SOME SUCCESS TO A DEEP-SEATED GERMAN NEED FOR PREDICTABILITY AND SECURITY IN ECONOMIC LIFE.

7. WE FOUND HONECKER'S AND TISCH'S TREATMENT OF WESTERN CRITICISM UNUSUALLY OPEN AND POSSIBLY SUGGESTIVE OF AN UNDERLYING CONFIDENCE IN THE REGIME'S ABILITY TO HANDLE WESTERN ATTACKS ON THE MOST CONFIDENTIAL

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VULNERABLE ASPECTS OF THE EAST GERMAN SYSTEM. FINALLY, WE NOTE THAT TISCH'S CONCLUDING REMARKS CONTAIN FORMULATIONS WHICH SINGLE OUT HONECKER FOR PRAISE AND ADULATION IN A FASHION MORE EXTENSIVE THAN WE HAVE SEEN IN THE PAST. WHETHER THIS IS ONLY EXCESSIVE ENTHUSIASM ON TISCH'S PART, OR THE HERALD OF A HONECKER PERSONALITY CULT, SO FAR LARGELY ABSENT FROM SED AFFAIRS, REMAINS TO BE SEEN.
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